LIFE

THE TEXAS SNIPER

Store window shattered by bullets fired from tower in background by Charles Whitman

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UNDER THE CLOCK, A SNIPER

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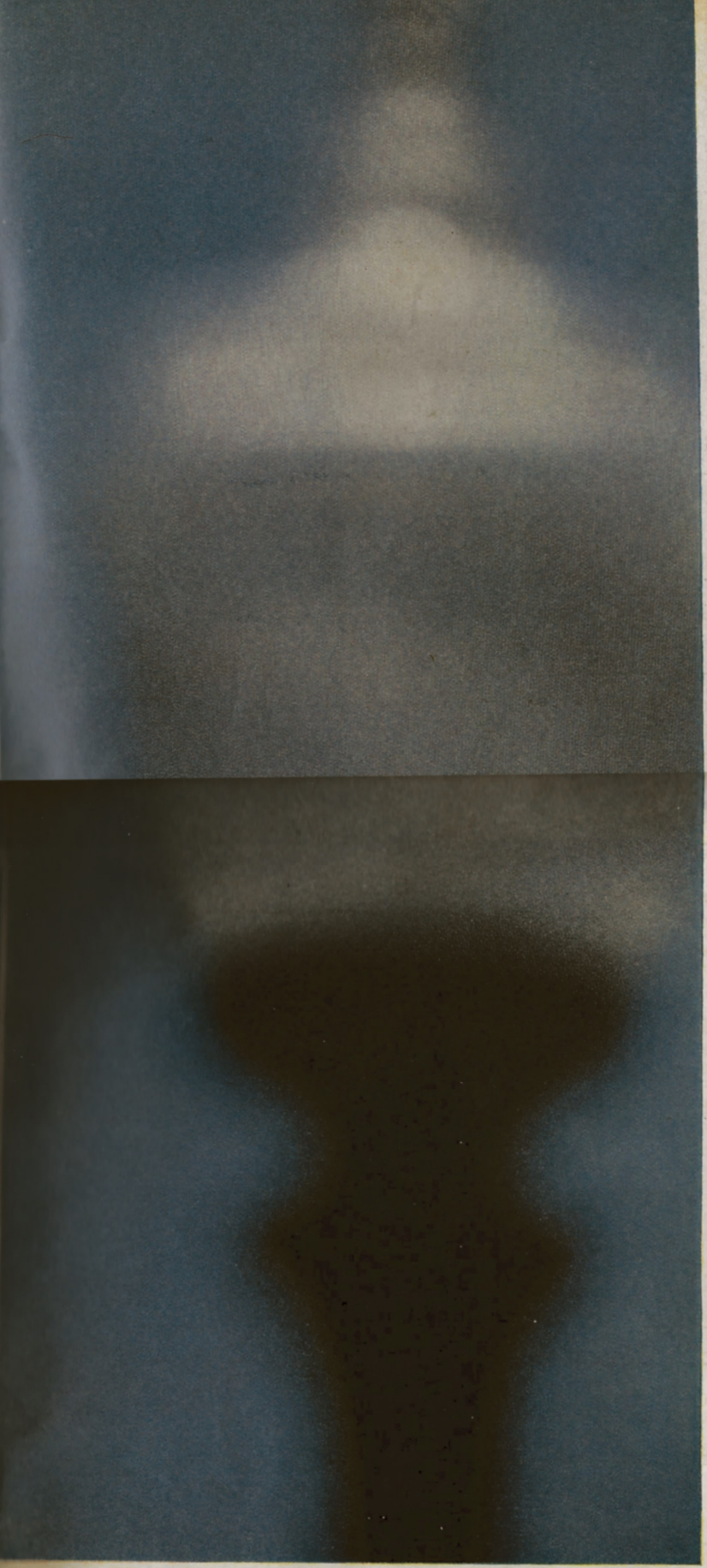


KILLER'S PERCH. On the 29th-floor observation platform of the Administration Building (*left*), 280 feet above the University of Texas campus in Austin, a puff of dust and smoke rises during the exchange of fire between police officers and sniper Charles Whitman, shielded by the parapet, as bystanders on the ground (*above*) crouch behind cars for protection.

WITH 31 MINUTES TO LIVE

PINNED DOWN ON THE SHADED CAMPUS

UNDER FIRE. A wounded man is loaded into an ambulance (*left*) as others, pinned down by the fusillade, take cover (*above*). Below, a woman peers at the tower through binoculars.

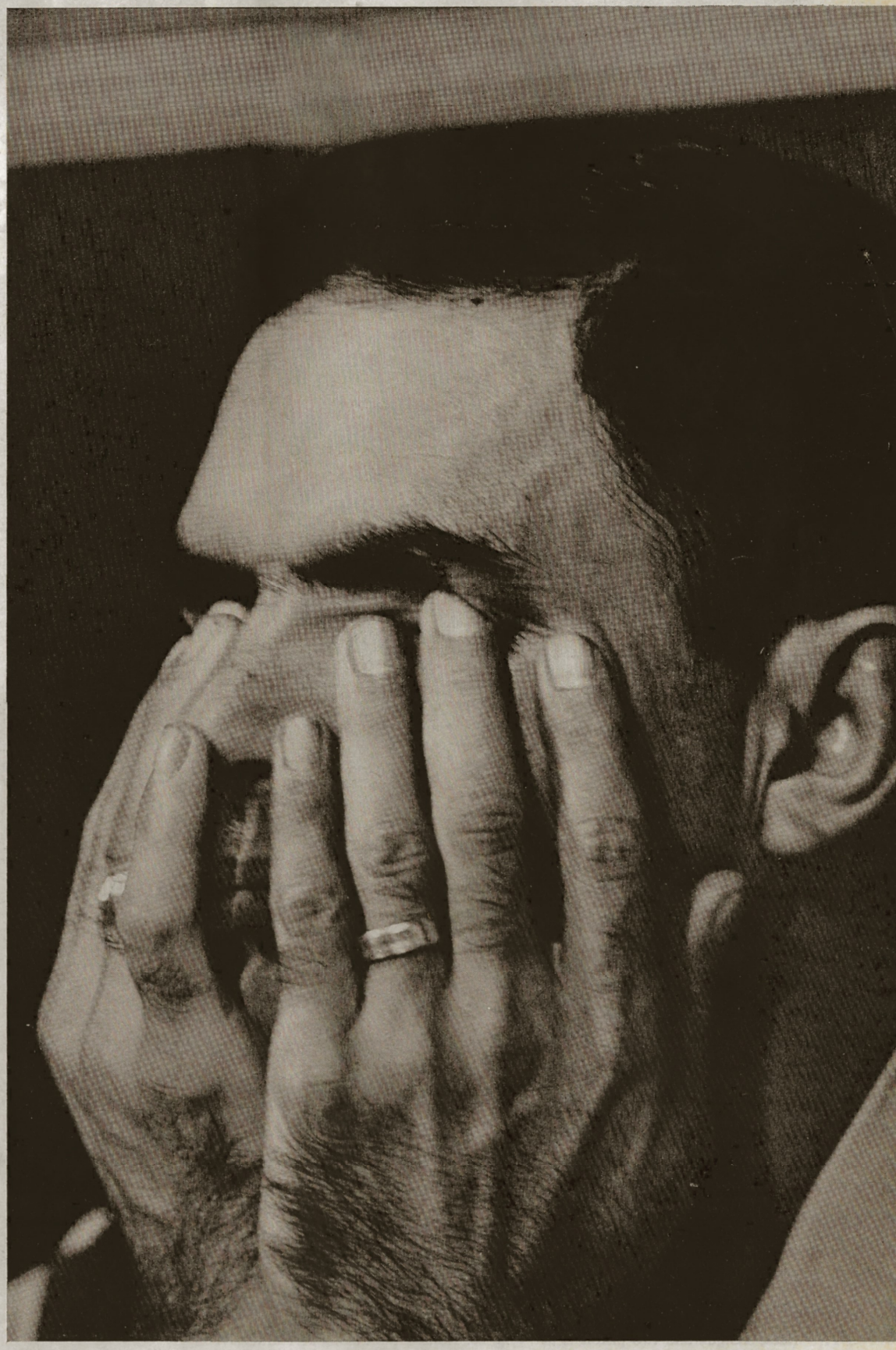
THEN SUDDENLY THE MADNESS WAS ENDED

Finally 90 minutes of indiscriminate slaughter came to an end. So did the life of Charles Whitman, gunned down by a policeman (*right*) overcome by the monstrous event. When Whitman dollied an arms-laden trunk across the lobby of the Administration Building, he had already killed his wife and mother. Before he died he killed 12 more and wounded 31—the most savage one-man rampage in the history of American crime.

What Whitman was doing was so outrageous, so hard to grasp, that people could not believe it. Amid the spanging gunfire, students ambled to Chambers restaurant as on any other summer day. Girls went on admiring the clothes in the windows of the Co-Ed shop. Browsers at the University News glanced up, but only briefly, from their books.

A boy and girl were killed in front of a bookstore. When a group of gawkers gathered across the street Whitman struck again, wounding three. A man died when he bent to help a pregnant woman —her child was stillborn.

A store manager was skeptical as three boys crawled in from the sidewalk, moaning. "We're across the street from a big university," she said later, "and I wasn't about to fall for that. And then I saw the blood—so much blood."



COP WHO ENDED IT. Patrolman Ramiro Martinez (*right*) is wracked with emotion as he tells how he killed Whitman, who lies sprawled (*above*) where he fell on observation platform.

SNIPER'S VICTIM. Stunned onlookers watch officers remove the body of a woman (*left*) who was killed when she came upon Whitman in the tower, before he took aim at people below.

CONTINUED 28A

1 PAUL SONNTAG

2 CLAUDIA RUTT

3 ROBERT BOYER

4 BILLY SPEED

5 ROY SCHMIDT

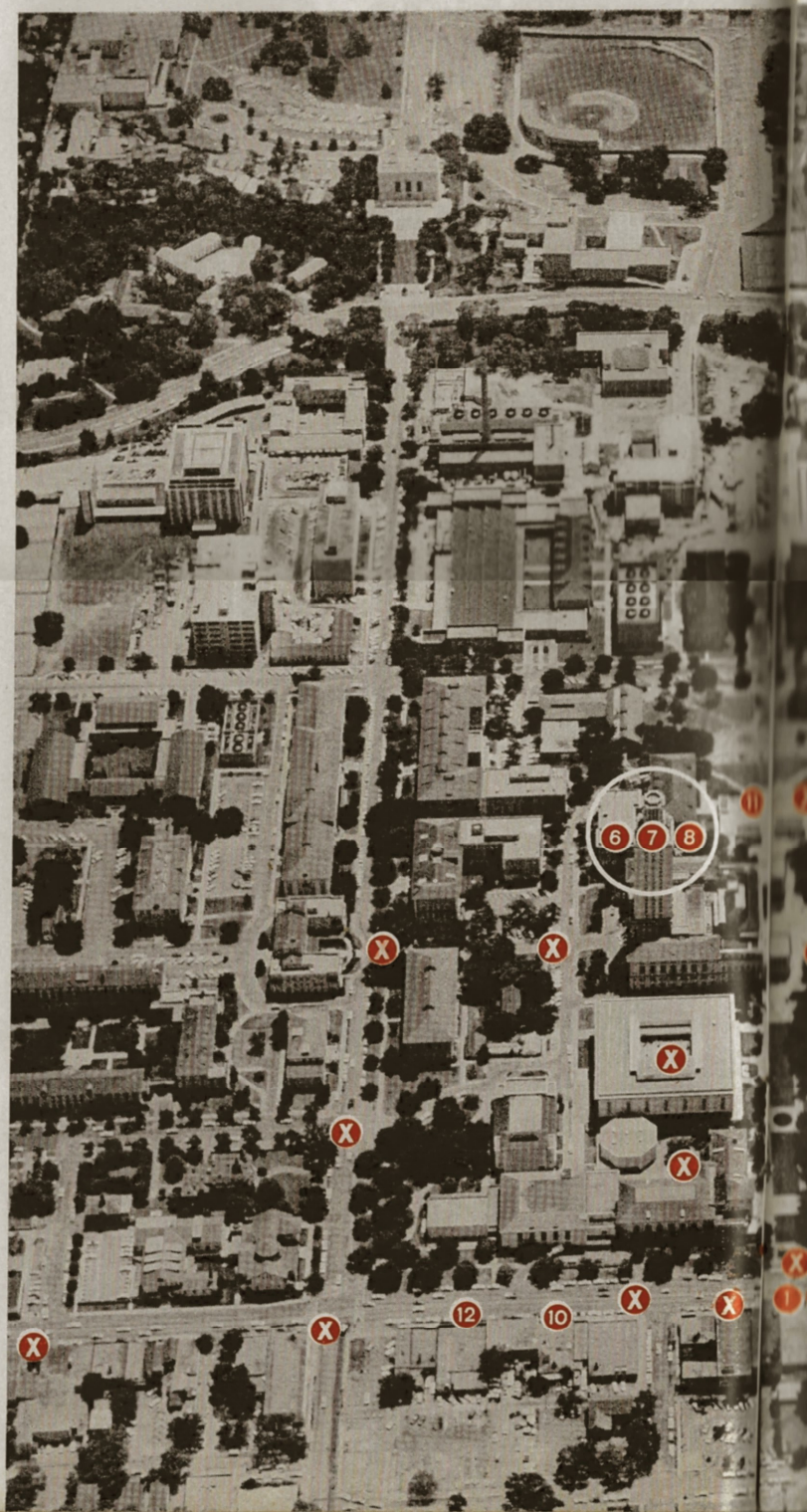
6 EDNA TOWNSLEY

7 MARGUERITE LAMPORT

8 MARK GABOUR

THE KILLER'S ARSENAL, HIS VICTIMS AND

WHITMAN'S ARSENAL. Like a gun collector's museum, Whitman's weapons and supplies are exhibited in the Austin police line-up room. The footlocker in which he carried the three rifles, shotgun and two pistols is at upper right. "Anything that boy could see, he could shoot," Whitman's father said after the massacre. "Those guns aren't to blame for anything." Two rifles, pistol case and camera in foreground were found in Whitman's home. He also took along an alarm clock and cans of peaches, sausages.



THOMAS ECKMAN

10 HARRY WALCHUK

11 THOMAS ASHTON

12 THOMAS KARR

WHERE THEY FELL

MOTHER AND WIFE. Wearing his Marine uniform and sharpshooter medal, Whitman posed happily with his mother in 1959. His wife Kathleen is shown in high school photo.

MAP OF DEATH AT TEXAS U.

This aerial view of the University of Texas, looking east from Guadalupe Street ("The Drag") to the football stadium, shows where Charles Whitman picked off his victims from the university tower, which is circled in white. Numbers on the aerial photograph correspond to numbers alongside the portraits and indicate where these people were killed. The Xs mark spots where people were wounded. **1** and **2** 18-year-old friends, Paul Sonntag and Claudia Rutt, walking in front of the university co-op store. The X just to the left of where the pair were slain is the site of the Sheftall jewelry store at 2268 Guadalupe Street whose window was pierced by bullets (*see cover*). **3** Robert Boyer, 33, visiting mathematics professor, on his way to lunch with a colleague. **4** Policeman Billy Speed, 22, struck while running toward the tower. **5** Roy Schmidt, 29, an electrical service repairman, hit returning to his truck from a routine call. **6, 7** and **8** Mrs. Edna Townsley, 51, university employe at the tower; Mrs. Marguerite Lamport, 45, and Mark Gabour, 15, on a sightseeing visit to the tower. **9** Thomas Eckman, 19, a freshman, walking across the campus after an anthropology class. **10** Harry Walchuk, 38, graduate government student, shot at a newsstand while taking a lunch break from a library study period. **11** Thomas Ashton, 22, attending a Peace Corps training session on campus. **12** Thomas Karr, 24, a senior. Whitman's arsenal included a 6-mm Remington Magnum rifle with a four-power scope, a .35-caliber Remington automatic rifle, a .30-caliber carbine, a 12-gauge sawed-off shotgun, a 357 Magnum pistol and a 9-mm Luger pistol. On the tower Whitman fired a final wild shot at Patrolman Martinez. Martinez emptied his revolver into Whitman's body. Another patrolman then opened up and blasted him with a shotgun.

CONTINUED 28C

CHARLIE WHITMAN: THE EAGLE SCOUT WHO

EAGLE SCOUT. At 13 Whitman donned his Scout uniform and stood before a church altar (*left*). He became a scoutmaster, was described by a mother as "wonderful with boys."

by DAVID NEVIN

AUSTIN

Charles J. Whitman was a man who carefully hid himself behind a sunny face of good nature and warmth. Scores of people were fond of him, but probably only one really knew him well. She was married to him, and she is dead.

When Whitman came down, very dead, from the tower on a cart, his friends were incredulous. A slight, thoughtful boy named Gary Boyd, who had shared classes with Whitman, said, "That's not the Charlie Whitman I knew. When he got up there he was somebody else. . . ."

Boyd was right. The Charlie Whitman he knew didn't exist.

Boyd saw Whitman as "a real all-America boy." He was big, strong, handsome, neat, hard-working. He was pleasant to be around and interesting to talk with. He spoke ill of no one—except, occasionally, his father—and he tried to speak well of many people. His grades were excellent. He enjoyed civic work, loved his wife, admired his professors and seemed to have no enemies.

But he was also a violent man. He bit his nails to the quick and perspired "rings of sweat on the coldest days." He was a meticulous perfectionist. He worked on engineering projects with passionate intensity but did not care for engineering or intend to remain in it. What he said in deep, intimate conversations seemed to change from person to person.

There appears no question that, at the end, he hated his powerful, dominant father. Late one night he sat in the home of Barton D. Riley, an Austin architect and lecturer in the U.T. school of engineering. "If my father walked in that door right now," he said, "I would kill him."

"Charles," Riley said, "you don't mean that."

"I certainly do," said Whitman.

Yet at about this same time the elder Whitman came to Austin to visit. Charles introduced him to A. J. Vinicik, an Austin real estate man on whose recommendation Charles had become scoutmaster of a local troop. The two older men had a long, pleasant conversation and Vinicik was astounded to learn after the violence that Charles had disliked his father.

Nor had Whitman always been the sunny, smiling lad his friends in the engineering school knew. Robert Ross, now a San Antonio businessman, recalls a poker game among friends in 1962 when he was a university sophomore. Whitman wore a 10-gallon hat. They played all night and at dawn Ross bet $190. Whitman called and lost. Whitman wrote a check for $190 and tossed it to Ross. The check bounced; the bank would only say that Whitman's account had been closed. Ross is 50 pounds lighter than Whitman and it was with trepidation that he called to demand his money. He found Whitman lying on a dormitory bunk in his underwear throwing a huge hunting knife into a closet door. Whitman grinned. "Look, kid," he said, "my family is loaded. I'll get you the money. Don't worry about it." The check was never made good.

That same year, 1962, Whitman married Kathleen Leissner, a pretty girl who was studying teaching. Kathy plainly loved him—but there is evidence she also feared him. He had joined the Marines in 1959 and was studying on an ROTC scholarship. His grades fell in 1963 and he returned to active duty to finish his hitch.

A young woman named Edith Molberg roomed with Kathy while Whitman was away, and she recalls that he beat his wife several times when he came home on leave. Kathy lived in terror of an accidental pregnancy, since Whitman had decided to delay children until he was through school.

Whitman was preoccupied with firearms. He had grown up in a household in which weapons were common, and he owned both pistols and rifles and was a good shot. Among the charges in his Marine court martial in late 1963 —gambling, usury and threatening to kick out another Marine's

GREW UP WITH A TORTURED MIND

teeth for failure to pay a debt—was the unauthorized possession of a small, unmilitary pistol. And at home, Kathy confided to her landlady that she was afraid to turn her husband's Luger over to the landlady for safekeeping for fear "he'll beat me again." This pistol—purchased, according to Charlie's father, when he was a Marine at Guantánamo Bay—was part of his arsenal on the tower

Whitman's best friend upon his return to school in January of 1965 was Larry Fuess, a muscular and handsome young architectural student with uncommon perception. Fuess knew that Charlie believed his father had beaten his mother. He also thought Charlie's chief fear was that he was inheriting his father's traits. A psychiatrist—to whom Whitman described two beatings given Kathy—thought the same thing.

In school again, Whitman's attitudes changed. He shifted from straight engineering to architectural engineering. His grades improved radically; so did his general attitude. And yet the pressures under which he purposely put himself seemed greater than ever.

He worked terribly hard. He carried 13 to 19 credit hours—15 hours is a normal full load. He also worked variously as a bank teller, a finance company collector and a clothing store salesman. Still his grades held up. Last fall he had nearly straight A's, and this spring he held a B average. Other students asked his help, which he gave graciously.

But to Whitman his best was never good enough. Barton Riley recalls a night when Whitman came to his house in despair because a project was not finished on time.

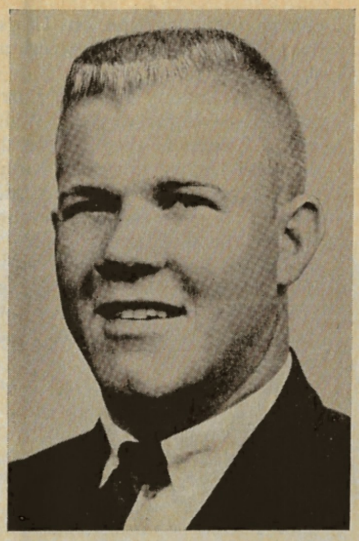
Another night, Whitman suddenly sat down at Riley's piano, and splendid music poured out for an hour and a half. Fuess was surprised when he heard of this. Riley hadn't known that Whitman refused to play for his friends.

None of his friends knew that Whitman was preparing to become a real estate broker. Despite his heavy schedule, he studied, took and passed the state licensing examination for real estate salesmen (at the time of his death he was a licensed and bonded salesman in the office of his friend from scouting, A. J. Vinicik—though he never sold anything).

During this period Whitman returned to scouting. He had been an Eagle Scout at 12, a considerable achievement, and now, as Vinicik put it, "He probably took up scouting just where he had left it as a boy. It was easy for him because he still was a boy." He took the boys camping, and on long hikes and nature trail studies. He taught them marksmanship in the careful, meticulous way of a man who knows and respects firearms. He used to hang a clothespin on a wire fence, start it spinning with .22 slugs and keep it spinning until the wood shattered. But after a few months he abandoned scouting.

Fuess recalls that Whitman was goaded by self-discipline, and that in turn he goaded Kathy. He set up a small gymnasium in his garage. "Wouldn't you think we would have enough self-discipline to exercise every day?" he would ask Kathy. Fuess and his pretty wife Elaine would look curiously at Whitman, for Kathy's figure was trim and neat and it was his own that troubled him.

In March, Whitman's mother left his father and came to Austin to live. Whitman drove to Florida and brought her back. It seemed to disturb him deeply; he decided to quit school. Without telling even his wife, he resigned from college and sold his books and equipment. Fuess heard about this and went to Whitman's apartment to find him packing. Fuess asked him what he planned. Whitman thought he might travel the country, from city to city: "I don't know. I've just got to do it."



THE WHITMANS. Charlie (*above*) told a college psychiatrist that his father (*bottom picture*) was "brutal" and "domineering." His parents separated five months ago. Top right: He kisses his bride, Kathleen, at their 1962 wedding in Needville, Texas.

Whitman's faculty adviser, meanwhile, was alarmed. He called Whitman in, concluded that his troubles were largely financial and arranged a quasi-scholarship at Texas A&M. Whitman agreed. That afternoon he told Kathy he was leaving her. Later they went to the Fuess apartment, and Kathy kept asking, "But Charlie, why, why?" He couldn't answer. He shook his head.

Fuess noticed something that had been present all day: far from showing the agony of a man under great stress, Whitman was calm.

That night Fuess called Barton Riley. Riley is 41, muscular, an ex-Marine who was at Iwo Jima. He can be tough when he chooses. It was late but he called Whitman.

"This is ridiculous," he snapped. "You are not going to do it."

Riley told Whitman to skip the classes he had under Riley until he caught up in the others, then return and buckle down. Whitman said, "Yes sir." Within 10 minutes of Fuess's call to Riley, Whitman called Fuess and said, "I'll be there tomorrow." The next day Whitman saw Riley. He grinned. "Thank you, sir," he said.

His decision to leave had been made on the instant. His decision to stay was just as quick. Then, as if nothing had happened, he went on to recoup his class position and emerge with excellent grades. It left Fuess and Riley puzzled.

Kathy Whitman persuaded her husband to visit the university health center psychiatrist. Dr. M. D. Heatly immediately realized something that none of Whitman's friends suspected. "He readily admits," the psychiatrist wrote in a report, "having overwhelming periods of hostility. . . . Repeated inquiries attempting to analyze his exact experiences were not too successful with the exception of his

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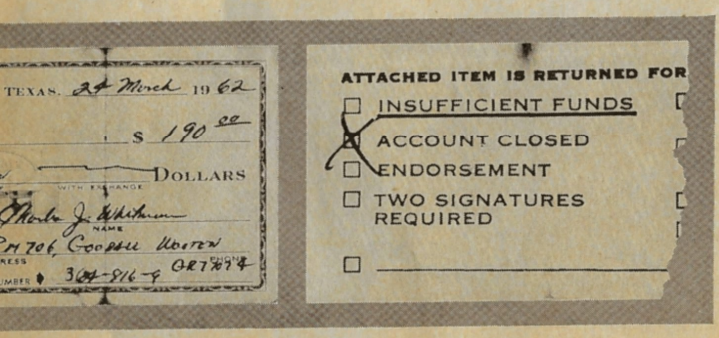

BUM CHECK. Whitman wrote check for $190 (*left*) to cover gambling debt in 1962 to schoolmate Robert Ross, who received bank form with "account closed" notice, never collected.

FROM TODDLER TO U.S. MARINE, HE SHOWED

WHITMAN CONTINUED

vivid reference to 'thinking about going up on the tower with a deer rifle and start shooting people.' " The remark did not then alarm the doctor. Patients frequently make sweeping statements of general hostility. Heatly made an appointment for Whitman a week later. Whitman never came back.

On the Thursday before the deadly Monday, a student named Tom Brightman borrowed Whitman's classroom notes. Whitman was gracious, as usual, but told Brightman he needed to study them himself that night. The exchange indicates that on Thursday, Whitman was still a serious student.

But on Sunday evening, Larry and Elaine Fuess went by Whitman's home, as they frequently did, and he had changed. Kathy was at work and he was alone. When they came in his typewriter was set out and he said casually, "I was writing to a friend in Washington whom I haven't seen in five years." But the machine was empty and there was only blank paper beside it.

The Fuesses believe now that the deadly pattern had started and that they interrupted it and that he tolerated the interruption, perhaps even enjoyed it. They talked for about two hours, until 9:30 p.m., and Fuess noticed that Whitman was completely calm. He had stopped biting his nails. Fuess mentioned this and Whitman just grinned. There were two serious quizzes the next day and they talked briefly about them. Whitman said matter-of-factly that he didn't know the answers, had not covered the work and did not intend to take the quizzes.

Whitman was to pick up Kathy at 10 p.m. She had worked a split shift—in the morning and again at night in her summer job at the telephone company—and in the interval he had taken her to dinner and to a movie. It was obvious they had had a delightful time together. Twice Whitman began a sentence he did not finish. "It's a shame," he said, "that she should have to work all day and then come home to . . ."

They left and Whitman drove away to pick up Kathy. Within a few hours his mother, in her apartment, was dead, and in a few hours more, Kathy was dead.

The next afternoon, with the dead and wounded scattered like leaves on the ground, Larry Fuess crouched by a building and wondered, as did everyone else on the campus, who in God's name was up there. The name of Charlie Whitman flashed across his mind, and he was instantly ashamed that he could think such a thing of a friend. When it was over, Larry saw Charlie's body carried from the tower.

RAISED WITH GUNS. Whitman held two of his father's rifles for a picture when he was two (*right*). At 17 (Christmas 1958) he and brothers Patrick (*left*) and John were photographed with toy gun. As a Marine, Charlie posed a year later with a rifle.

AN EASY FAMILIARITY WITH GUNS